

Message Text

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16

ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-01 INR-07 L-02

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 RSC-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 IO-10 SAJ-01 /068 W

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R 051838Z FEB 75 ZDK

FM AMEMBASSY LONDON

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7991

INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN

AMEMBASSY DUBLIN

AMEMBASSY LUXEMBOURG

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY ROME

AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE

USMISSION EC BRUSSELS

USMISSION OECD PARIS

USMISSION NATO BRUSSELS

C O N F I D E N T I A L LONDON 01842

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: UK, PINT

SUBJECT: MORNING-AFTER APPRAISAL

REF: LONDON 1724

1. SUMMARY: WITH HEATH OUT OF THE RUNNING, CONSERVATIVES ARE GIRDING UP FOR SECOND HEAT IN LEADERSHIP SWEEPSTAKES FEBRUARY 11. ANNOUNCED CONTENDERS ARE THATCHER, WHITELAW, AND PRIOR. END SUMMARY.

2. CONSERVATIVE MP'S WERE AS SURPRISED AS HEATH BY FIRST-BALLOT RESULTS ON LEADERSHIP ELECTION REPORTED REFTEL. EVEN THATCHERITES WHO HAD EARLIER EXPRESSED CONFIDENCE THATCHER WOULD WIN ENOUGH VOTES TO FORCE A
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SECOND BALLOT ADMITTED TO SURPRISE THAT SHE HAD TOPPED

THE POLL. DESPITE HER IMPRESSIVE SHOWING, SHE AND HER SUPPORTERS WOULD EXPRESS ONLY "CAUTIOUS OPTIMISM" ABOUT HER CHANCES IN SECOND BALLOT.

3. SECOND BALLOT IS A DIFFERENT RACE. WHETHER THATCHER CAN RETAIN HER 130 VOTES FROM FIRST BALLOT IS AS IMPORTANT AS WHETHER SHE CAN GAIN ADDITIONAL NINE REQUIRED FOR SECOND-BALLOT VICTORY. A NUMBER OF HER FIRST-BALLOT VOTES WERE TACTICAL ANTI-HEATH VOTES WHICH WILL BE CAST FOR OTHER CANDIDATES ON SECOND BALLOT.

4. HEATH ANNOUNCEMENT OF WITHDRAWAL FROM BALLOTING OPENED THE WAY FOR WILLIAM WHITELOW TO ANNOUNCE HIS CANDIDACY LAST EVENING. ALTHOUGH HE WAS APPOINTED CHAIRMAN OF THE PARTY IN 1974 BY HEATH AND HAS BEEN A LOYAL HEATH SUPPORTER, HE IS IN HIS OWN RIGHTS A FORMIDABLE OPPONENT TO THATCHER. HE HAS A REPUTATION FOR CONCILIATION, A RECORD OF ACHIEVEMENT WHEN HE WAS DEALING WITH NORTHERN IRELAND AND HE HAS ROOTS IN NORTHERN ENGLAND AND SCOTLAND WHERE THE TORIES LOST HEAVILY IN BOTH FEBRUARY AND OCTOBER ELECTIONS. HE IS KNOWN, RESPECTED AND LIKED BY PARTY MEMBERS WIDELY AND IS PERHAPS THE ONLY TORY NOW IN A PROMINENT POSITION WHO ELICITS ANY KIND OF POPULAR RESPONSE OUTSIDE THE PARTY. HE IS WIDELY THOUGHT TO BE THE PARTY ESTABLISHMENT'S PREFERRED CANDIDATE.

5. THE MEDIA HAVE BEEN HAVING A FIELD DAY SPECULATING ABOUT OTHER POSSIBLE CANDIDATES. JAMES PRIOR ANNOUNCED HIS CANDIDACY TODAY. HE IS MORE OF A HEATH CREATION THAN WHITELOW, BUT IS ACCEPTABLE TO SOME MEMBERS OF THE PARTY WHO MIGHT NOT CONSIDER WHITELOW FORCEFUL ENOUGH. PRIOR IS CURRENTLY SHADOW SPOKESMAN ON EMPLOYMENT AND DOES NOT APPEAR TO HAVE SUFFICIENT DISTINCTION TO DO MORE THAN ATTRACT ENOUGH VOTES TO KEEP EITHER WHITELOW OR THATCHER FROM WINNING ON THE SECOND BALLOT. OTHER POTENTIAL CONTENDERS ARE MAURICE MACMILLAN, JULIAN AMERY, AND JOHN PEYTON.

6. THE ALACRITY WITH WHICH HEATH STEPPED DOWN AS LEADER
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WITHIN TWO HOURS OF THE ANNOUNCEMENT OF YESTERDAY'S RESULTS WAS DICTATED BY A REALISTIC APPRAISAL THAT MRS. THATCHER'S 130 VOTES COMBINED WITH FRASER'S (16) AND THE ABSTENTIONS (11) ADDED UP TO AN OVERWHELMING "NO-CONFIDENCE" VOTE. HE ALSO WANTED TO CLEAR THE WAY FOR HIS CLOSEST SUPPORTERS, WHITELOW AND PRIOR, TO DECLARE THEIR OWN CANDIDACIES. HE RESIGNED WITH DIGNITY, AND IS NOW RECEIVING THE ACCOLADES OF THE PRESS AND PARTY FOR

HIS 10 YEARS OF LEADERSHIP AND FOR THE PARTY'S ACHIEVEMENTS WHILE HE WAS PRIME MINISTER, PARTICULARLY IN REGARD TO BRITISH MEMBERSHIP IN THE EEC. HE HAS INDICATED THAT HE WILL NOT LEAVE POLITICS OR GIVE UP HIS SEAT IN COMMONS, BUT HE HAS NOT COMMITTED HIMSELF TO TAKING A SHADOW CABINET POST UNDER A NEW LEADER.

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